Fire in Gas Pipeline in Mumbai

4140. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether underground fire in a gas pipeline of Mumbai Mahanagar brokeout on 13th March, 2003;

(b) whether an enquiry panel was set up;

(c) if so, what are its findings; and

(d) whether Government would formulate regulations/standards for laying and operating underground utilities in all the Metro cities to eschew such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR) : (a) No, Sir. However, a fire incident took place in Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL)'s gas pipeline at Andheri (E), Mumbai on 13-2-2003.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Committee investigated the accident and submitted its report to the Government on 21-3-2003. In the Report the Committee has reported that at about 6.10 P.M. there was sudden release of natural gas from the City Gas Pipeline of Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL) at Andheri East, Mumbai. At the time of the incident, a company was carrying out Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) for laying the Optical Fibre Cable Ducts. Their drilling rod hit and made a hole in the MGL's gas pipeline resulting in sudden release of gas. At that time a nearby vendor at the road junction lit an incense stick, which resulted into a spontaneous ignition of the escaping gas with high flames.

(d) The concerned companies follow stringent standards in laying and operating underground gas pipelines. Further steps have been taken by MGL as per recommendations of the Committee to avoid such incidents.

National Policy on Culture

4141. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 4359 given in the Rajya Sabha on 7th May, 2002 and state :

(a) whether Government have formulated a National Policy on Culture;

(b) if so, the salient features of the policy;

(c) whether specific provisions are proposed to be incorporated for bringing legislation to protect cultural heritage sites and properties; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN) : (a) to (d) No formal policy document has been formulated. However, the 'mission' of the Government is to preserve and promote all forms of art, culture and heritage and protect and conserve the protected monuments. A number of Academies - Sangeet Natak, Lalit Kala and Sahitya - have been constituted, and there is also a National School of Drama.

Financial assistance to Travancore Devasom Board, Kerala

4142. SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether any proposal has been received from the Kerala Government to declare Sabarimala as a natural centre of pilgrimage;

(b) whether Government have taken any decision in this regard;

(c) whether any proposal seeking Central aid to improve the pilgrim tourism has been received from the Travancore Devasom Board; and

(d) whether Government are considering to extend the financial assistance to the above project?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN) : (a) A proposal has been received for declaring Sabarimala as National Pilgrim Centre.

(b) There is no practice to declare a place as natural/national centre of pilgrimage.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Development and promotion of tourist places/centres is the responsibility of the State Government/UT Administrations themselves. However, the Department of Tourism provides Central financial assistance on the basis of project proposals received from them for integrated development of tourist circuits, product/infrastructure development of destination, rural tourism, etc.